

THE VILLAGE IDOL

BY IMOGEN CLARK

THE air was full of dampness, the chill of night and the coming storm. Along the road leading to Little Silver a man groped his way—a mere blurred shape, at one with the low bushes on either side that clattered their bare twigs as if in comment on his passing. Every now and again he glanced fearfully about him, trying to penetrate the gloom which his fancy peopled. The sudden lift of his face showed white in the surrounding darkness. The gaunt trees took on grisly shapes, the bushes were like crouching figures bending forward in eager curiosity. There were discordant, unfriendly sounds abroad, vague whisperings and laughter. He moved forward slowly, almost painfully, dragging his feet as if fatigue or cold had put shackles on his limbs, though he did not falter for a moment. On an on he toiled, steadily—never pausing; he seemed impelled by some unseen force that would not let him rest.

The road dipped abruptly into a hollow where the lights of the village gleamed like so many watchful eyes guarding its repose. The traveler crept on more cautiously, every crackling twig, every stumble over unseen stones sounding like thunder in his apprehensive ears. But the mournful wind drowned his progress, and the frozen ground retained no imprint of his footsteps; it was as if Nature refused to take him to her heart. He was like a shadow born of the night and the darkness. The keen air buffeted him, and the occasional scurrying rain-drops struck against his face like the lash of condemning tongues.

He kept to the middle of the road, as it widened into the one street of the village, to avoid any chance passerby; but Little Silver was comfortably housed for the night, with the exception of a few convivial souls who loitered, as was their wont, at the tavern, "swapping stories." The quiet homes lay on either side of the way, back of the strips of bare garden; there was no hospitality in their waking eyes for the stranger at their gates. He passed them wearily, counting them off on his numb fingers. Suddenly his heart gave a quick throb. On his left, well back from the street, a curtained window cast a square of yellow light upon the ground; there was an element of welcome in its cheery aspect. He wavered an imperceptible moment, then approached warily, crouching, lest anyone within the house might catch a glimpse of his watching face.

The interior showed a long, low room with sanded floor, occupied by eight or ten men, grouped in a sociable semicircle in front of the well-fed stove. In the center, his chair a trifle nearer the rosy blaze than the others, was a thin, undersized man with bowed shoulders. His face, which the firelight revealed, bore the marks of Time, but he did not seem old. There was an irrepressible touch of youth in his eyes and in his kindly smile.

As the wayfarer sheltered himself beneath the eaves, someone opened the window a hand's breadth, and the warm, tobacco-scented air rushed out pleasantly. He tasted it hungrily, longingly. It touched him like a caress. He bent nearer the opening, listening eagerly to the conversation within.

"It gets 'tarnally hot in this room," one of the men laughed. "Go on, Steve."

The little man with the pleasant face looked up deprecatingly.

"You've heard all my stories over an' over," he said. "I never was much of a hand at spinny yarns. There's Nathan, now—"

"You leave Nathan alone," the person referred to, grumbled, "and fire ahead. It aint you we want to hear about anyway—'twouldn't take long to exhaust that subject. It's Anthony an' his doin's that we're keen on. Why, sir," he turned to a man on his right—the schoolmaster, who had but recently settled among the villagers, a stranger, an' you never knew Anthony Deane, though you couldn't be in this village over night 'thout hearin' of him. He's our big man, an' there aint a soul in Little Silver who isn't proud of him, though it's a good twenty years since he was here. That's the only thing we have against him—he's never come back. He's been so busy makin' money an' buildin' up towns that he's had no chance, but he don't forget us. He never writes a letter home, 'thout sendin' us some message. Does he, Steve?"

"Never."

"An' in other ways, too; this very tobacco we're smokin' is a present to Steve, to be shared with us boys."

"Don't say anything more 'bout that, Wilton."

"You can't hush me up, Steven Deane. If you aint willin' to acknowledge yourself beholden to your brother, why the rest of us feel different. I'm goin' to have my say out. Who helped them shipless Reeds last summer—who, but Anthony? Whose name headed the subscription for the new school-house? Anthony Deane's. An' when the minister made himself sick workin' early an' late, who sent him that box of things from Guildhaven? Anthony again! You didn't want to let on, Steve, but the parson wouldn't keep still. We knew who he had in mind when he prayed in church that Sunday for the distant friend whose hand is always stretched out to his old comrades; we'd have guessed even if we hadn't known for sure. All through service I could picture Anthony in his old place in the choir. Do you remember how he used to laugh over at the girls? Oh! he wa'n't what you'd call strictly pious, but

he'd come to church an' singin' practice pretty reglar. He'd about all the voice there ever was in your family, eh, Steve?"

"You're right there," Steven rejoined. "Father couldn't even carry Old Hundred, an' as for me, I can't more'n whistle Duke Street to this day, though I've practiced faithful. An' when it comes to singin' those pesky high notes floor me. One solid note way down deep is 'bout all I can tackle. But Tony could always take the whole lot, an' as for the turns an' shakes, to hear him was like listenin' to a lark singin' in the mornin' when all creation's fresh."

"Yes, sir," he went on straightening his bent shoulders proudly. "they're speakin' of my brother, my only brother, an' it is a gratification to know how he's held here. I don't want to seem boastful, but there! if you'd known him in the old days you'd understand. There never was such a boy as Tony—never. He'd a face like one of those pictures you see sometimes in a book, only with a light on it such as never creeps into the book, an' eyes the color of brown leaves in a pool when the sun shines on 'em. An' he was always smilin'. There were just the two of us, Tony an' me, or me an' Tony, for I come first 'cordin' to year, though it don't seem right to mention me before him. Even if he was younger, he outdistanced me in everything. At school, though I'd a goodish start, he caught up an' passed me surprisin' quick; I never was much at my books, but there wa'n't a lesson Tony couldn't master. We set a heap by him, an' it was a sad day, I tell you, when he went away to make his fortune; but, as mother said, we couldn't look to keep him always. The world wanted just such men as he; keepin' him at home would have been like shuttin' the sun up in one spot if that could be, an' not lettin' it shine anywhere else. Father had died the year before, so there was only mother an' me up at the old place, but Tony didn't forget us. He was what you might call an irreglar correspondent, his time bein' pretty crowded; besides, I don't think he was born in a man to be fond o' letter-writin'. There aint nothin' like a white page to scare away ideas. Gorry! the few times I've been called on to write I've most chewed off the pen-handle thinkin' what to say after I've put down the headin's—"

"Everybody knows you're different from Tony."

"That's true; I was only jedgin' from myself to account for the reason he didn't write oftener. Well, sir, what do you s'pose that boy did, come Christmas? He sent us home presents bought with his first spendin' money. An' mother—why, bless you, she was the proudest woman on the globe. You see, he was her Benjamin; but, youngest or eldest, it wouldn't have made no difference so long as he was what he was. She loved him in a way that made you swallow quick. She got a little unreasonable as time went on an' he didn't come home; bein' a woman she couldn't understand that a man's got to stick to his work early an' late if he's goin' to carry it through. She fretted herself sick lookin' for him, but I know she understood before she went that he didn't come because he couldn't come. Dooty an' an inclination travel in single harness in this world, an' seldom along the same road."

"There's been no call to bring him back of late years, I'm the only one up to the old house now, an' it's a longish way to where he is in the West. He's sort of grown up with the place, identified himself with it, you might say; bein' head man there, with everyone lookin' to him, it wouldn't do to pull up stakes an' come home. But he remembers Little Silver an' is proud of it; the boys have come to see that now, an' I guess they feel the years haven't changed Tony a particle."

Steven Deane pushed back his chair and looked around the circle with a beaming face, as if his own meagre living were in some way glorified by his brother's more splendid achievement. Then he cleared his throat noisily and rose, shutting his feet and bustling about for his lantern. This signal of departure was followed by a general clatter of chairs. Little Silver was always quick to act upon an initiative; suddenly the men discovered that the fire and their pipes, together with Steven's monotonous voice, had made them drowsy. They chaffed him good-naturedly as they filed out into the raw night, those who lived at a distance carrying lanterns whose swaying lights cast strange shapes upon the frozen ground. As the door opened, the listener concealed himself hastily behind some empty barrels, whence he watched the little company disperse; the sound of their voices calling good-night floated back to him with an accent of cheer. When the quiet had settled again upon the street, he came out from his hiding. Far ahead of him a low light glimmered like some little star gone astray on the earth. He hurried forward, trying to keep up with his shining, but suddenly it turned at right angles from the road he was taking and seemed to climb skywards. The next moment it vanished completely.

The man kept on resolutely. After a short interval he left the road for a narrow lane which wound up the hillside, pushing forward with breathless impatience until his further progress was barred by a low, dark building, its rambling outline only vaguely perceptible in the gloom. There was a single light in the lower window at one side of the door. He stopped for a moment at the porch before mounting the step; there was but one, he remembered. The wood creaked under his footfall and the boisterous wind echoed the sound mockingly. He put out a trembling

hand and groped timidly for the knob, grasping it with a quick feeling of joy; it slipped back in answer to the demand he made, and the door opened slowly. It opened directly into the lighted room.

Steven Deane was warming his hands at the fire and making the curious noise with his lips which he designated as whistling. A lamp burned brightly on the high mantel, and in the light it cast upon the hearth an old dog lay in drowsy content, his bushy tail drumming the floor in appreciation of his master's presence. At the noise of the creaking door the animal raised his head with a low growl.

"It's just the wind, Dan," Steven said, reassuringly. "I s'pose I forgot—" He turned as he spoke.

speaking. Since I left this house twenty years ago, more than half the time has been spent inside of stone walls at the country's expense. I haven't the clean record you've made out of the folks here. What do I know of that? I saw the light at Grove's as I came by and I listened at the open window. They say listeners never hear good of themselves, but that wasn't so in my case. I heard what made me hang my head in shame because I didn't deserve it; something inside of me urged me to interfere and tell the real truth. But I couldn't do that; I couldn't break down the beautiful white house you've built around my name. What made you do it, Steve—what have you gained? As I stood there listening to all those lies, the years rolled back and I remembered the times beyond numbering



"GO ON," ANTHONY SAID FROM BEHIND HIS HANDS.

The man on the threshold let the door slip to back of him with a heavy clang. There was a moment's silence; then Steven gave a low, incredulous cry.

"Tony!"

"Yes, Steve, I've come home."

The brothers stood opposite each other, separated by the width of the room; the one with a face in which delight and doubt struggled for the ascendancy, the other with a strange expression, half defiant, half pleading.

"Tony," the little man said again, slowly. "Tony!"

The next instant he was at his brother's side, his arms about the tall, gaunt figure. The white face relaxed a trifle.

"I'm not fit to have you touch my hand," Anthony said, huskily. "I've got the marks of prison on me, it's stripes have eaten into my soul. I've been fightin', brawlin', almost murderin'. Don't look at me like that; it's the truth I'm

blown down—hence, the term "windfall." "Pin-money" owes its existence to the prohibitive price at which pins were sold at the time of their first appearance, somewhere in the fourteenth century. A law was passed forbidding the maker to sell them except on the first and second day of January, and this difficulty of procuring them, together with their high price, made them the rage with all the grand dames of the day. So much store did the wo-

men set by these coveted aids to the toilette, that it became a custom to set aside a sum, called "pin-money," to be given to the bride on her wedding day. Regular "pin-money" allowances soon followed, until every woman of means had her desire for them gratified. Although pins themselves are cheap and cheaper, the term "pin-money" still stands for any extra allowance for the luxurious trifles he loved of womenfolk.

"There's many a ship between the cup and lip," is another phrase which has an interesting little bit of history attached to it. Ancaeus, one of the ancient Kings of Samos (an island in the Grecian Archipelago) treated his slaves with great cruelty. One of them, under sentence of death for some slight misdemeanor, in connection with a vineyard the King was having made, cursed the King thus: "May you never live to drink the wine from your vineyard!" The King instantly ordered him to be thrown into a dungeon until the vineyard was completed, that he might behold the failure of his prophecy, and then be put to death. The time came; the vine-cup stood ready to the King's hand. The slave, rancored and bound, was brought in to behold the fulfillment of his curse. Looking the King sternly in the face—strong in the knowledge that he had no more to lose—that his life was already forfeited—he cried "Know now, O King, there's off a slip between the wine-cup and the lip!" Hardly had he spoken when the message came that a herd of wild boars had broken into the new vineyard. Seizing their spears the King and his warriors rushed to the vineyard, where the King, stumbling over a root, was torn by the huge tusks of one of the wounded brutes, and died before the enraged monster was finally overcome. Such is the story; a grim origin for a light and careless household phrase.

By these means may be traced many an interesting custom of yore, many a trivial matter of etiquette which owes its origin to time-honored usage arising from very different conditions. And to the historian, the genealogy of our every-day phrases will always be matter of interest.

PHIL DEXTER.

name on the list as if you'd told me to do it, just to keep you in lovin' remembrance for Marm's sake an' your own. The givin' don't pinch me, seein' how I've been all alone, till now."

Anthony put his head down on the table and sobbed aloud, the great, tearing sobs that a strong man utters sometimes in his career and which seem to come from the very groundwork of his being. Steven stared in dismay, his thin, anxious-lined face working tremulously.

"Don't boy," he said, soothingly, "it's all right now—you've come back."

"Yes, I've come back, like a thief in the night, skulking through the woods lest anyone should see me. What would they say, these neighbors who think so well of me, if they knew I was just out of prison? That's where I come from, that's where I've been for the past four years, where I would have stayed another year but that my good behavior won me a discharge. My good behavior! Don't laugh, Steve."

The older man put his hand gently on the other's twitching arm. "I'm not laughing, Tony, God knows. Stop laughing yourself; you'll hurt yourself. Come, let me give you something to warm you up a bit, an' then you can get to bed. An' we'll put the past away; there's no need to talk it over. I don't want to know of it. You're home at last, that's enough for me."

"But you shall know. The reason you didn't find me was because I changed my name on leaving prison, and went out West. At first I tried hard to do the right thing, but the wrong was easier, and I always liked the easy way best. As the years slipped by I grew wiser, I sank lower. What does it matter if part of me fought against this life I led? The other part conquered. When I was imprisoned this last time I was bitter and more reckless than ever before. I chafed against the confinement, and was continually punished for insubordination. What did I care? To me the rules existed only to be broken, authority to be defied. I gained the name of the wildest and most dangerous of all the prisoners; but in November of that first year there came a change over me. God! how I sneered when I filed with the rest of the men into the room where the Thanksgiving services were to be held. My heart was black with the most horrible thoughts, but on a sudden they rolled away as the clouds do before a brisk wind. It wasn't the prayer or the speaking that did it, it was just a woman's voice. I don't remember what went before, or what came after, I only know that she got up to sing and stood there with the light from the window streaming full on her face, and she was the face of a saint. Not one of those smooth, soft faces that look as if life was all roses, but a face that showed passion and striving and peace. If she hadn't uttered a note, I should have been a better man just seeing her. How can I tell you about her voice? It was like the eye of God; it searched the blackest depths of my heart. As she sang hymn after hymn, I forgot the prison, and saw the meeting-house yonder as plain as day. There were the girls in the choir smiling over at me, there was Molly Pitman, with her eyes cast down and the red creeping into her cheeks where a dimple was showing. Clem, ever Wilson at next, and there were mother and you in the pew, and old Gardner across the aisle, with his head in his hands as if he were praying, though we all knew he was asleep. It was all clear to me, as clear as you are this minute, and I hadn't thought of it for years. I sat motionless, listening to that wonderful voice that painted those old pictures one by one upon my sin-stained heart."

"When she had finished singing and turned to go, something seemed to prompt her, for she stepped back and asked if there was any particular song or hymn we cared to hear. One of the men near me said softly, 'Home, Sweet Home.' It was the merest whisper, but she heard and looked our way. Her eyes met mine in a glance that was full of the most beautiful pity and encouragement; she thought I had made the request. 'Oh!' she said, with a little gasp of pain, 'I don't!' The next moment she began to sing. Before she got through the first verse the room was full of sobs; most of the men were crying like children. She sang on to the end, though the tears were streaming down her face; then she went away."

"After that, all those rebellious feelings slipped from me; in their place a great longing sprang up in my heart for mother and the sweet, simple life I'd left so far behind. I used to dream of home every night, and throughout the day it was always in my mind. I thought of you constantly, old fellow; somehow, through all my shame and misery, I felt that you'd stand by me and I wanted you—I wanted you."

"When I was free they found me employment, and I worked at it until I earned enough money to bring me home. I couldn't stay any longer. All to-day I loitered in the woods. I thought my story might have leaked out here, and I'd wait till dark before I entered the village. I was afraid the people would turn from me; and instead—instead—You've done what I haven't been man enough to do. You've kept my name clean."

"I dream of home so strongly and made the beckoned me to a home life possible for even me, but I know now." He put out his hand and touched Steven's work-roughened fingers humbly.

"Your great heart," he said, with a choke in his voice.

A Boon

COME hither, my heart's darling; come, sit upon my knee, And listen while I whisper a boon I crave of thee.

I feel a bitter craving, a dark and deep desire, That glows beneath my bosom like coals of kindled fire.

Nay, dearest, do not doubt me, though strangely thus I speak; I feel thine arms about me, thy tresses on my cheek.

I know the sweet devotion that links thy soul with mine, I know my heart's emotion is doubly felt with thine.

And deem not that a shadow has fallen across my love;

No, sweet, my love is shadowless as yonder stars above. Oh, then, do not deny me my first and fond request!

I pray thee, by the memory of all we cherish best,

By that great vow that bound me forever to thy side, And by the ring that made thee my darling and my bride,

Thou wilt not fail nor falter, but bend thee to the task; Put buttons on my shirt, love—that is the boon I ask!

Little Thinks

The trade in books has progressed just where the free library movement is strongest; and on that matter I speak from personal knowledge and experience.—Hall Caine.

If the individual attacked has perfect nerve, and will stand perfectly still and hold his hand out, a dog, however savage, may take the hand into his mouth but will not bite it, if it remains entirely immovable.—D. H. W. Horlock.

Queer Sayings and Their Origin

WE often hear it said, with a lofty contempt, that so and so "doesn't know enough to come in when it rains," quite oblivious of the fact that most of us are equally ignorant along other lines. The majority of Americans, for instance, are even unaware of how they came by their own name as a nation, i. e., "Brother Jonathan."

During the great struggle for Independence, General Washington, then commander of the Revolutionary forces, went to Massachusetts to make arrangements for the successful carrying on of the war. Jonathan Trumbull, the Governor of the State of Connecticut, stood high in the General's esteem, and Washington, finding ammunition short, remarked "We must consult Brother Jonathan." The consultation was a successful one, the difficulties were removed and the army immediately adopted the catch-phrase. Later the phrase was dropped, but the name remained, until now it stands for the American Nation as a whole.

"Tip" is another word in common use whose origin has puzzled many people. In the days when traveling was done by means of stage coaches, the English inns were supplied with a staff of servants poorly paid and overworked. The guests of the house, desirous of catching the Royal Mail Coach, due probably to pass the inn at 5.30 A. M., were wont to leave orders over night that they might be awakened at such and such a time; that breakfast was to be prepared and their bill ready. A small box was fastened to the wall of the hall, with T. I. P. (to insure promptness) painted thereon. Into this the sagacious guest deposited a small sum, varying with the amount of service he required. From this custom arose the present day word "Tip."

"Waiting for his shoes," "step into his shoes," "fill his shoes," are all common enough expressions in daily use, yet how few of us know how they arose. It was the practice of the old Northmen, when adopting a son, to put their own shoes on the lad's feet, and bind his ankles with thongs cut from their own belts. From

this custom arose the expressions above referred to.

"Windfall" is another word of curious origin. In the days of the Norman Conquest a law was made forbidding the peasants to "cut, fell or main any tree in his Majesty's dominions, the same being the property of his Majesty King William of Normandy, William the First." After a heavy storm, however, the peasants were at liberty to gather all they liked that the wind had

blown down—hence, the term "windfall." "Pin-money" owes its existence to the prohibitive price at which pins were sold at the time of their first appearance, somewhere in the fourteenth century. A law was passed forbidding the maker to sell them except on the first and second day of January, and this difficulty of procuring them, together with their high price, made them the rage with all the grand dames of the day. So much store did the wo-

Slates Used Long Ago

IT is not easy to tell exactly how long a period slates have been used by schoolboys; but they were used as writing tablets as far back as the Middle Ages, and probably, therefore, they were introduced into the schools of Europe at a very early period in the history of education in that part of the world.

And, indeed, it would be hard to find a more suitable substance for the purpose than the easily flaked stone which yields a smooth surface with a minimum of trouble on the part of the workman. The ancients, as we know, frequently employed waxen tablets for the purpose of writing letters or making calculations which were not intended to be permanent and could easily be erased or smeared out of all recognition with the finger. Diligent housekeepers and clandestine lovers found these means of reckoning or communication equally indispensable; while, for the man of letters, whether orator or lyric poet, the tablets on which were jotted down the heads of a great speech or passionate stanza to some fair lady were almost as necessary as pockets (of which the ancient world knew nothing) to the modern man or boy.

Compared with these perishable aids to memory, the slate was very long lived. For though the name implies a brittle substance easily broken

off when the line of cleavage is discovered—being equivalent to the French "éclat"—yet slate does not collapse like wax with the application of moderate heat; and even if cracked by fall, might still be used if its frame was stout enough to stand the shock. It is not surprising, therefore, that the slate, when once introduced into the school and domestic life, soon became popular.

But slate is also a good roof covering, and has been used for this purpose for eight centuries at least. Tiling, which still holds its own to a large extent, partly on account of the artistic appearance of the modern slated roof, was practically universal in the towns of the ancient world which came under the influence of Greece and Rome. It is interesting to note in this connection that as time went on builders reduced the thickness of their slates.

Whether this was due to reasons of economy—for heavy slates need to have solid timbers beneath them—or to other considerations, the fact remains that the slates used in the cheap house of the present day have a very cheap appearance. The difference is clearly seen by contrasting the flimsy look of a jerry-built suburban villa with the massive solidity of an old slate roof farmhouse which has weathered the storms of centuries.

Not Very Tame

THE terrible attack upon a woman recently made by a lion in a London music-hall recalls the fact that a still more dangerous show animal is the elephant.

A bull elephant is one of the most fickle creatures known. He is good-natured and submissive one moment, and the next his keeper is simply a mass of pulp!

"An elephant," said an expert keeper, "is twice as dangerous as a lion, a tiger, or a bear. Those animals have to be watched very carefully when one is with them in their cages, but the tension of watching lasts only a few minutes at a time. An elephant, on the other hand, is allowed more freedom, and as one cannot be on the alert all day long, he gets his chance when he wants it. He often fiercely resents even a mild joke. We elephant keepers grow fantastic after a few years of the work. We expect to be seized and trampled to death some day, but live in hopes that it may not be soon. The great danger is when an elephant is just turning into a rogue. All elephants turn rogues sooner or later, and they never recover. The female elephants turn rogues earlier, and are more violent than the males, and the females are more dangerous in ordinary times, too."

"A good elephant trainer can command a big salary. I know one who has been receiving \$125 a week for eleven years. Mere keepers, however, are poorly paid."

Awful Loss

"Ah," she sighed, "I shall never hear his footsteps again; the step I have listened for with eager ears as he came through the garden gate; they step that has so often thrilled my soul as I heard it on the front porch. Never, never again!"

"Has he left you?" asked the sympathetic friend.

"No; he has taken to wearing rubber heels!"